

NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH DEVON BRANCH
OF THE DEVON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2011

www.northdevonbees.org



Editorial With the modern problems affecting bees and beekeeping we need to become as knowledgeable as possible about all aspects of our craft.

We are lucky that in our North Devon Branch we have some very experienced beekeepers encouraging and sharing their knowledge. We have had a very successful series of winter talks (thank you Julie) and we have a dedicated education team looking after the beginners course and helping the improvers.

We are hoping that our queen rearing programme at Horestone will not only provide bees for the beginners to get started—but also inspire more of us to have a go at queen rearing ourselves. We would like to encourage enthusiasm for breeding and raising good productive queens. It would be very helpful if those of you queen rearing at home this year, could share some of your experiences and stories with other Branch members, via this newsletter. If you have any questions that you would like answering please contact me.

By sharing and supporting each other we can look forward to steadily improving both our knowledge of queen rearing and the quality of bees in our area. *Sylvie*

Chairman's Chat No doubt you're all busy catching up with your beekeeping now that the weather has been kind. There's certainly plenty of pollen around in the trees this year for the bees to collect and the nectar bearing flowers are now in evidence. However, when I drove down to south Devon the other day I noticed that the oil seed rape crop was already starting to flower and then wilting for lack of rain which is quite a worry for local beekeepers who rely upon it as an early source of honey.

As always, our Apiary Support Team is working exceptionally hard to provide training and educational opportunities for members so I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend the Nosema Day this weekend which promises to be a very valuable insight into how we can manage this problem.

Wishing you a successful forthcoming season,

Chris Tozer

Horestone in March What a glorious month it has been, sunny, dry and at times very warm, everything the bees and beekeepers needed after the long cold winter.

All the colonies have come through the winter well proving again that it is not cold that kills bees.

Winter / early spring work has centred on laying down slab areas under and around the hive stands to both deter the Small Hive beetle from pupating in the soil around hives (hopefully it will never arrive but varroa did!) and to improve the footage for beekeepers gathered around. Wonderful teams of volunteers have toiled away doing this and with the remaining slabs will lay an area in front of the 'coffin' and around the work bench. This is in line with the apiary hygiene policy which the AST have been reviewing and should help ensure that no hive debris is left lying around to potentially spread infection.

Barbara and Jeff have been working hard on the Risk Assessment Document including a Safety and dress Code and an AST Responsibility Document which will be available for all to read on the notice board just inside the door of the hut.

We are very grateful to Ian (Barbara's other half) for the lovely 'cottage style' fence he has put up, this will be continued on down the path with a gate at the bottom when timber and time allow.

The gardens this spring look lovely, full of bee friendly flowers.

Queen Rearing Chris U and his team have selected the colonies to be used for Queen and drone breeding and will shortly be feeding them to develop into double brood box colonies as the next step. The aim is to produce nucs for sale to beginners.

Green team (Barbara) have transferred G 3 , found to have 2 queens both laying, the old one was despatched, into the WBC hive.

Red team (Derek) are hoping to put bees into the long hive that Derek has made.

Kay leads the Blue team, called the teaching team although all our colonies are there for the purpose of education.

White team now have Julie as team leader as Sylvie has become the 'floater' and Queen rearing assistant.

A new Commercial hive will be arriving shortly thanks to a grant obtained by Jack from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty group.

All our colonies now have beautiful new varroa floors as part of the ongoing IPM system.

Nosema, all colonies will be sampled and samples taken to the County Nosema testing day.

We look forward hopefully to a good spring and summer this year. *Julie Elkin*

EVENING TALK, FRIDAY 25 MARCH 2011

Friday night's talk was the last this winter of the very successful winter talks organised by Julie.

We were lucky to have Adam Vevers, Regional FERA bee inspector, talk to 27 members about his method of queen rearing.

Adams queen rearing career started in Alberta, USA where he worked on a bee farm that produced 20,000 queens a year; he now produces about 80 queens a year.

Queen rearing influences the traits of colonies therefore we should breed queens for desirable traits of: strong healthy bees; gentle, easy to handle bees; good honey yields; hardy, overwintering ability; **NOT PRONE TO SWARMING**; varroa tolerance and hygienic behaviour.

The time for queen rearing is May and June, during the natural swarming season. The natural tendency to swarm is said to aid the production of good queen cells.

Adam's queen rearing uses the grafting technique with the aid of a "Cloake Board". He considers that queens cells **started** in a queenless state make better queens with a higher rate of acceptance. Queen cells **reared and finished** in a queen right state produce higher quality cells. The way to achieve these objectives is to use a "Cloake Board".

Queen cell raising using a "Cloake Board".

"Cloake Board"

A "Cloake Board" is made by fitting a queen excluder to a frame similar to the deep frame of a varroa floor into which a sheet of ply wood can be inserted and withdrawn.

See the following website. www.honeybeesuite.com/?p=829

Cell Building Colony

- Make a floor with two closable entrances, similar to a Snelgrove Board and place under the following colony.
- Use a gentle colony with a marked queen to produce a strong colony with a double brood box.

Drone Colony

- Choose a colony with the traits you value and insert drone foundation in April to produce a colony with a large number of drones. Site the drone colony where it is intended to have the mating nucs.

When Ready to Start

- Find the queen in the cell building colony and put her in the bottom box.
- Place a "Cloake Board" between the bottom and top box with it's entrance over the bottom box entrance. Close the bottom box entrance and open the entrance on the opposite side. Returning bees will find their entrance blocked so will enter the entrance of the cloak board
- Rearrange the brood boxes so that all but two frames of brood at all stages are in the bottom box.
- Place two frames of brood in the centre of the top box with frames of stores plus pollen.
- Feed the bees in the top box with thin syrup using a frame feeder.
- Insert the plywood sheet in the "Cloake Board".

24 Hours Later, Grafting:

- Make sure you are available ten days following grafting.
- Prepare some wax or plastic queen cup cells by placing a drop of diluted royal jelly in the base of each cup.
- Choose some frames of eggs from your queen breeding colony and brush, not shake the bees from it. Lift a two day old larvae from it's outside, curved body using a grafting tool or a "ooo" artist's paint brush and carefully place in the queen cup, ontop of the drop of diluted royal jelly. It is important to place the larvae the right way up.
- The top box has been queenless for 24 hours and has been fed with thin syrup.
- Destroy any queen cells on the two frames of brood in the top box and place the frame of charged queen cups between the two frames of brood.

Evening Talk continued.

24 Hours after Inserting Queen Cups:

- Remove the plywood insert from the cloake board. Started queen cells will not be destroyed and the majority should be built satisfactorily.

Prepare Some Queenless Nuclei

- The day before removing the queen cells from the cell building colony, prepare a queenless nucleus for each cell produced.

Ten Days After Grafting

- Remove the mature queen cells. This should be one day before emergence, therefore if left another day a queen could emerge and destroy the remaining Queen cells. Place the queen cells in the previously made up queenless Nucs.
- You should have about 80% success rate of mated queens.
- Unite the nucs with queenless colonies you want to requeen, using the newspaper method.

Jack Mummery

Have your colonies tested for Nosema

I hope that you have read page 83 of this month's 'Beekeeping' magazine.

You spend lots of time and money on your bees but do you bother to find out if they are healthy? For a modest charge of only £1.00 per sample for a Nosema examination and £2.00 for an Acarine examination you can find out if they are suffering from these diseases. Note that the Acarine mite is not considered to be such a problem probably as a result of the treatments for Varroa. I have not seen a mite for several years. Arrange for a sample of 30 older workers taken from the hive entrance and deliver it to the branch microscopists. Include a stamped addressed envelope. See page 82 of the April edition of 'Beekeeping' on how to take a sample, kill the bees and store them ready for examination.

As Branch Microscopist I have obtained the assistance of Julie Elkin and Kay Thomas. Julie has agreed to accept samples from the eastern side of the branch area, Kay from the centre and myself from the western area. Hopefully this will make it easier for members to send in samples of bees for examination.

Last year only one sample was submitted to the branch microscopist – but then the charge was £5 a sample so your committee has agreed to cut the cost.

If you see this in time there is also a free Nosema Survey being organised in Tiverton on Sunday April 10th at Uplowman Village Hall near Tiverton. Details also in 'Beekeeping'. Myself and Peter Auger are attending.

Chris Utting

BEE EVENTS

Our first event of the year is on **Wednesday 13th April, at Rosemoor Garden.**

We are taking part in their '**Introduction to Beekeeping Day**'.

We will be on hand to talk to and answer peoples questions.

We are taking the Observation Hive - people are always interested in it. We will take as many books and pamphlets as we can to hand out.

It would be good to have honey and wax products to show and we might even sell some.

So if anyone has anything ready to show or sell can they please let me have them ASAP.

It starts at 10am and finishes at 4pm. **If anyone can come and help please let me know, we will need at least two others there to give us a lunch break; and you get a chance to see the garden as well.**

Barbara - 01271882303 baranlyle@hotmail.co.uk

From the education section

Basic Assessment

Now is the time start thinking about completing the basic assessment. I will organise a session at the association apiary probably during July or August for that to take place. You just need to have been keeping bees for a year. It is quite straight forward and will set you on the path to becoming a better beekeeper. Please let me know if you are interested in completing the basic assessment. Tel 01598 760209 or

'e' mail jackmummery@mypostoffice.co.uk

Jack Mummery

Branch Education Officer

DIARY DATES

DBKA Annual Nosema Survey 2011

Colebrook Community Centre, Plympton - 9th April.

Uplozman Village Hall, near Tiverton EX16 7DP

Sunday 10 April -10 to 4

South West Celebrity Lecture 2011

Keith Delaplane: Honeybee Genetics and Breeding

Tuesday 12th April 7.30 pm, see April Beekeeping for further information.

Spring Convention, Stoneleigh

15th - 17th April (workshops, courses and seminars).

May 19/20/21 2011 - Devon County Show - help needed for all kinds of things for the show. Contact Barry Neal 01805601715

National Honey Show - Weybridge

27th October – 29th October 2011

International classes and beekeepers' lecture convention

Garden Forage for April

Crocus, Mahonia, Primrose, Celandine, Grape Hyacinth, Willow, Blackthorn, Gorse.

Planting for your garden for future forage.

Sunflowers, Marigolds, Buddleia, Asters, Roses, Lavender, Herbs (chives, thyme, oregano), Mallow, Fruit trees/bushes, Borage,



Derek

01769 561033

The shop will be open on Tuesdays each week from 10.30 am to 12.30. Also in order to help those unable to call on Tuesdays it will be open the first Sunday in April and May at the same times. Should you have any queries or require further information please contact me.

The National Bee Units web site contains links to a number of very useful information leaflets. These can be downloaded. They include subjects such as managing varroa, small hive beetle, foul brood, hive cleaning and sterilisations'. There are also a number of best practice guidelines and facts sheets available.

To access these and other information to to <http://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/downloadDocument>

HONEY-NUT BANANAS

Ingredients

40g butter

3-4 tbsp honey

4 bananas, sliced half lengthways

A good splash of rum

Chopped pecans and ice cream, to serve

Method

1. Melt butter with honey in a heavy-based frying pan and cook until just beginning to brown.
2. Place the bananas in the pan. Cook for 3-4 minutes, turning occasionally, until caramelised.
3. Add a good splash of rum to the pan and allow to evaporate, then sprinkle with chopped pecans and serve with ice cream.

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